

Double standards: A cross-European study on differences in norms on voluntary childlessness for men and women

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ABSTRACT

We examine double standards in norms concerning voluntary childlessness. Whether choosing childlessness is more accepted for men or for women is not a priori clear; we formulate arguments in both directions. Multilevel analyses are conducted including individual and societal-level variables. Our sample consists of 44,055 individuals nested in 25 European countries, obtained from Wave 3 of the European Social Survey (2006). Subjective norms were measured with a split ballot design; half of the respondents was randomly assigned items regarding women choosing not to have children, the other half was assigned items regarding men. Findings indicate that men are more disapproved of when choosing not to have children than women. Generally, this double standard is endorsed by women, not by men. Clear cross-national variation in the double standard exists, which is partly explained by the level of gender equality (GEM). Surprisingly, the higher the gender equality, the stronger the double standard.

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INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, the prevalence of childlessness has increased enormously, although at different rates across Europe. The percentages of childless women born between 1960 and 1964 vary from a low of 5 in Bulgaria and 6 in Slovenia to a high of 24 and 27 in Germany and Switzerland respectively (Dykstra, 2009). Not only has the prevalence of childlessness increased during the last decades, the same is true for the societal acceptance of childlessness (Koropeckyj-Cox & Pendell, 2007a; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). This trend towards greater acceptance does however not imply that the choice to remain childless is universally accepted in the Western world.

During the last decades, Western societies have also witnessed an enormous increase in gender equality. Despite the link between this gender role revolution and 'new' demographic behaviors, such as choosing childlessness, the acceptance of such behaviors has not been studied from a gender perspective. The theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Lesthaeghe, 2007; Van de Kaa, 1987), which describes and aims to explain the changes in demographic behavior in Western societies which started in the 1960s, has been criticized for a lack of an explicit gender perspective (Bernhardt, 2004). Research on attitudes and norms regarding childlessness and other non-traditional family behaviors ignored potential differences in norms for men and women, either by using gender neutral survey items or vignettes (e.g. Koropeckyj-Cox & Pendell, 2007b, Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001) or by focusing on women (e.g. Letherby, 2002; Mueller & Yoder, 1997). This is unfortunate because parenthood impacts differently on the lives of men and women and consequently choosing not to become a parent may not be accepted to the same extent for men and women. Therefore, in this study we focus on double standards in attitudes towards voluntary childlessness.

A double (or multiple) standard can be defined as a different code of conduct for different groups of people, or in other words: a different evaluation of the same behavior for different groups of people. The distinction of groups may be based on a variety of characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, or socio-economic background (Foschi, 2000). Most often the concept is used to refer to a different norm for men and women, as it is in this paper.

Whether man or women who choose not to have children are more disapproved of is not a priori clear. We formulate arguments in both directions. We also look into whether men and

women hold equally strong double standards or not. Furthermore, double standards might be related to societal level of gender equality. Therefore we expect that norms about what kind of behavior is acceptable for men and women are likely to vary between societies. We examine whether double standards vary across European countries, and to what extent this variation can be explained by differences in national levels of gender equality in terms of economic and political participation and power.

Doing so, we extend the literature in several ways. First, we contribute to the study of attitudes and norms regarding childlessness by taking into account differences between norms for men and women have been neglected. Second, we contribute to the literature on double standards, by broadening the range of topics studied. Third, we aim to explain cross-national differences in the double standard regarding voluntary childlessness. We make use of the third wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), which was conducted in 25 European countries and includes items with a split ballot design that provide the unique opportunity of studying double standards with regard to family behavior.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

The classical and most researched example of a double standard is the double standard regarding men's and women's sexual behavior. In general, men are allowed a wider range and frequency of sexual experience than women. For instance, promiscuity and extra-marital affairs are judged as less acceptable for women than for men. Research indicates that there is still evidence of the existence of a double standard with regard to sexual behavior (see Crawford & Popp, 2003 for an overview), although other researchers did not find evidence (Marks & Fraley, 2005; O'Sullivan, 1995). Another example of a double standard based on gender concerns the inference of task competence. Surveys and (quasi-)experiments have shown that women have to try harder and are allowed fewer mistakes than men for the attribution of the same level of ability (for an overview of these studies see Foschi, 2000). Furthermore, physical signs of aging result in more negative evaluations of women's attractiveness and overall worth than men's (Berman et al., 1981, Deutsch et al., 1986). Double standards in the evaluation of family formation have not received much scholarly attention yet. To our best knowledge, it has not been investigated whether double standards in the acceptance of voluntary childlessness exist.

Why would we expect that men and women who opt for childlessness are judged differently? On the one hand, being a parent is often considered to be more central to the lives of women than to those of men (Bulcroft & Teachman, 2003; Hird & Abshoff, 2001; Letherby, 2002). Women usually take the main responsibility for child care and are often less focused on a professional career than men. It has also been suggested that parenthood is considered to be more 'natural' for women than for men; a Canadian study showed that a majority of male and female respondents indicated that the desire to be a mother was innate for women, whereas the majority of males and females thought that the desire to father was learned behavior (Miall, 1994). Hence, motherhood might be considered as more important for women's identity than fatherhood is for men's and therefore choosing not to be a parent could be seen as more deviant for women than for men. Consequently, our first hypothesis is:

H1a) Women who choose not to have children are more disapproved of than men.

On the other hand, nowadays it is not unusual to acknowledge the negative sides of parenthood, such as strains and sacrifices in personal and professional life (Dykstra, 2009; Sobotka, 2004). Especially women's employment opportunities are restricted by parenthood. Men's opportunity costs associated with parenthood are often lower and educational and career opportunities may not be threatened by fatherhood, especially in countries that support a more traditional male breadwinner model (Kalmijn & Saraceno, 2008). There is also some evidence that parenthood increases daily strains more for women than for men (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2006; Ross & Van Willigen, 1996). Besides, women are the ones who have to bear the physical costs of pregnancy and childbearing. Hence, as the costs of parenthood are generally higher for women than for men, there might be more understanding for women who choose not to have children than for men. Based on these arguments, we formulate the following contrasting hypothesis:

H1b) Men who choose not to have children are more disapproved of than women.

Above, we assumed that men and women are equally likely to endorse double standards concerning voluntary childlessness. However, it is questionable whether this is true. Perhaps people can identify or empathize better with the fertility choices of people of the same sex and therefore disapprove more of the non-conformist behavior of the other sex. Women tend to stronger admit that parenthood restricts their employment opportunities than men do (Koropecj-Cox & Pendell, 2007b). Perhaps men do not recognize the costs of parenthood for

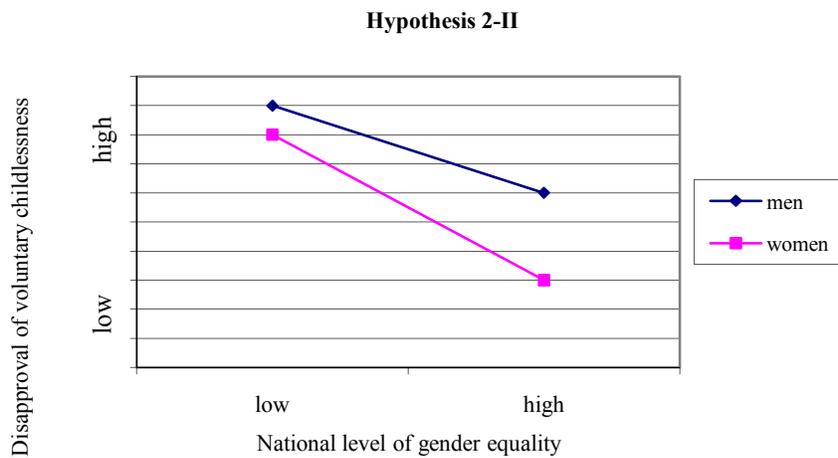
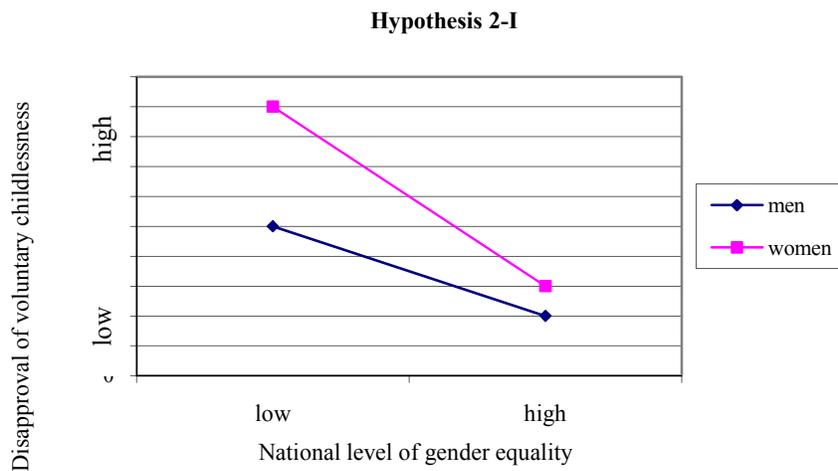
women as much as women do themselves. Besides, holding a double standard which mainly restricts the other sex allows more freedom for the own sex and thus also for the self.

There is no empirical evidence on the extent to which men and women hold double standards regarding childlessness and surprisingly little research on other kinds of double standards took the sex of the respondents into account. The scarce empirical evidence mainly comes from research among American and Canadian college students on the sexual double standard and findings are mixed. Jurich and Jurich (1874) did not find evidence for gender differences in the sexual double standard. Robinson and Jedlicka (1982) found that each sex imposed greater restrictions on the sexual behavior of the other sex. Yet, Milhausen and Herold (1999) found that female students were most likely to believe that it is women who are the harshest judges of women's sexual behavior. As empirical evidence on double standards is inconclusive and there is no established theory formation on potential differences between men and women in their endorsement of double standards, we regard this issue as exploratory. We distinguish in this study how women judge voluntary childless women, how women judge voluntary childless men, how men judge voluntary childless women and how men disapprove of childless men.

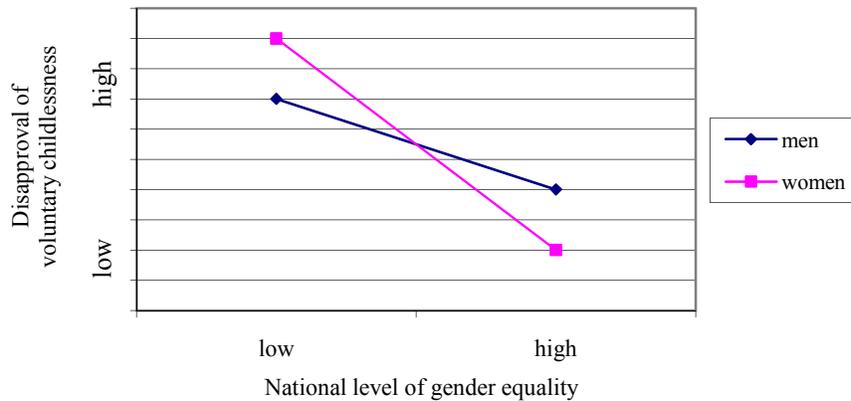
Finally, we think that the existence or strength of the double standard concerning voluntary childlessness is related to the level of gender equality in a society. In gender egalitarian societies, childlessness is more accepted for men as well as for women than in less gender egalitarian societies (Merz & Liebroer, 2010). We assume, however, that norms for women vary stronger by national level of gender equality than norms for men, because higher levels of gender equality have been preceded by a process of women's emancipation: their lives have changed more than those of men (England, 2010; Gershuny & Robinson, 1988; Sayer, 2005), and probably attitudes about women's roles have changed more than attitudes about men's roles. As the level of gender equality varies across European countries, we expect the double standard to vary across Europe too. However, the exact form that this variation takes, depends on the average double standard across these countries. Three different situations could apply.

First, it could be that across Europe childlessness is more accepted for men than for women (i.e. H1a is true). If so, we would expect that this double standard in favor of men becomes smaller with increasing levels of gender equality (H2-I). This situation is graphically depicted in Figure 1a. If, in contrast, voluntary childlessness is more accepted for women across

all countries (i.e. H1b is true), this tolerance towards childless women might be even greater in gender egalitarian countries, where emphasis might be given in particular to women’s right to autonomy. Hence, the double standard is expected to become larger with increasing levels of gender equality (H2-II). This situation is graphically depicted in Figure 1b. Finally, a third possibility is that a kind of ‘flip over’ occurs: in countries with low levels of gender equality, double standards are in favor of men, whereas in countries with high levels of gender equality, double standards are in favor of women (H2-III). In this case, the double standards in different countries could average each other out and we might not find a main effect of gender of target. This situation is graphically depicted in Figure 1c.



Hypothesis 2-III



METHOD

Data

The data used in this study stem from the third round of the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS is a repeated cross-sectional survey conducted in many European countries, measuring changing social attitudes and values using face-to-face interviews. Data for the third round were collected in 2006 in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The ESS intends to be representative of the residential population of each participating nation aged 15 years and older, regardless of nationality, citizenship or legal status. Anyone who had been living in the country for at least one year could be selected as respondent. Strict guidelines were used to obtain a dataset of high methodological quality. An effective sample size of at least 1,500 respondents in each round (800 for countries with less than 2 million inhabitants) was intended. A total of 47,009 respondents participated. Response rates per country vary between 46.0% and 73.2%. The (unweighted) average is 63.5%. We did not employ selection criteria for our sample. Due to missing values our sample consisted of 44,055 individuals, nested in 25 countries.

Measures

Dependent variable

Our dependent variable, attitudes on voluntary childlessness was measured with the question ‘How much do you approve or disapprove if a woman/man chooses never to have children? Answer categories ranged from 1 (strongly disapprove) to 5 (strongly approve). We inversely recoded the answers so that a higher score implied higher disapproval. The survey has a split ballot design; the female version of the questions was randomly assigned to half of the respondents and the male version was assigned to the other half.

Independent variables

Individual level variables

As described above, our dependent variable is a measure of attitudes, not of a double standard. Hence, the double standard is not measured at the individual level. However, our interest is in the double standard as a characteristic of groups; of men, women, and populations of countries. Therefore, in this paper we focused on the effects of the dummy variable which indicates whether the respondent was assigned the female or the male version of the question (0 = male version, 1 = female version). This dummy variable was labeled gender of target. The gender of the respondent was also included (0 = male, 1 = female).

Additionally, we included a set of control variables at the individual level. Age measured in years; educational level, ranging from 0 (primary education not completed) to 6 (second stage of tertiary education); and employment status (0 = not employed, 1 = employed). We accounted for religion by using the degree of religious involvement. This was measured as a factor score based on three items: frequency of church attendance, frequency of prayer, and self-evaluated level of religiosity (measured with the question ‘How religious are you?’). A factor analysis revealed one clear factor underlying these items. The higher the factor score, the higher a person’s religious involvement was. Furthermore, we included partner status, distinguishing the following categories: (1) married or widowed, (2) divorced (and not married or cohabiting with a new partner), (3) cohabiting (unmarried), and (4) single (i.e. never married and not cohabiting). Parental status indicates whether the respondent has ever had (a) child(ren) (0 = childless, 1 = has ever had one or more children). Note that the control variables are not related to our independent

variable of interest, gender of target, as that is a random dummy variable. Therefore, these control variables do not change the effect of gender of target on attitudes towards voluntary childlessness. Control variables are normally included in statistical models because they might be related to the independent variable(s) of interest as well as to the dependent variable. However, also in this case the control variables are important to include, because they might be associated with attitudes towards voluntary childlessness as well as with gender of respondent and with the country level variable gender equality (see below). Interaction effects between each of the latter two variables and gender of target are central to this paper. Thus, by including the control variables we control for compositional effects (that would otherwise have been attributed to the level of gender equality) and correct the effect of gender of respondent. An overview of the descriptive results on these variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 here

Country level variable

The level of gender equality is measured by the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). This measure combines (in)equalities between men and women in three areas: political participation and decision making, economic participation and decision making, and power over economic resources. The country scores were retrieved from the United Nations Development Programme (2008). Theoretically, the scale ranges from 0 (inequality) to 1 (equality). We multiplied the scores by 10. The scores of the countries in our sample range from 4.6 in Ukraine to 9.1 in Norway and Sweden. We centered the scores around the mean. The non-centered scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 about here

Method of analysis

A number of multilevel regression models were estimated. Analyses included variables at the individual and the country level and within and cross level interactions to predict double standards in norms on voluntary childlessness. The effect of the variable gender of target indicates whether there are double standards regarding voluntary childlessness, and the direction

of the effect indicates whether voluntary childlessness is more disapproved of when displayed by men or by women (Hypotheses 1a and 1b). To investigate whether men or women hold stronger double standards regarding voluntary childlessness (exploratory issue), we added the interaction term of gender of target and gender of respondent to the model. To investigate whether the existence and strength of the double standard varies across countries we used random-slope models allowing the slope of the variable gender of target to vary across countries. To test whether the strength of double standards is related to the level of gender equality in a country (Hypothesis 2), we added the cross-level interaction term of gender of target and GEM. Analyses were conducted with the `xtmixed` command in Stata10 using the maximum likelihood method to estimate the variance components.

FINDINGS

Descriptive findings

Figure 1 displays the mean disapproval of voluntary childlessness by gender of respondent and gender of target; in other words, the bars represent women's attitudes towards women's childlessness, women's attitudes towards men's childlessness, men's attitudes towards women's childlessness, and men's attitudes towards men's childlessness. The figure shows that most disapproval is expressed by women of men who choose not to have children. Women are less disapproving of women choosing voluntary childlessness; hence women are holding double standards. Men are generally somewhat less disapproving of voluntary childlessness than women, and although they also seem to hold a double standard in favor of female childlessness, the gap is much smaller.

In Table 3, we present for each country the mean scores on disapproval of voluntary childlessness and the double standard, the latter calculated as the average disapproval of voluntarily childless men minus the average disapproval of voluntarily childless women. Thus a positive score implies that men who choose not to have children are more disapproved of than women who choose not to have children. We observe that disapproval of voluntarily childless men is stronger than that of voluntarily childless women in most countries, although in about half of the countries the difference is quite small. The strength of the double standards shows considerable variation across Europe. It is strongest in Sweden and Finland, while in the Eastern

European countries and in Austria and Portugal the differences between norms for men and women are smallest. Only in Cyprus the double standard is clearly in the reverse direction: here women choosing not to have children are more disapproved of than men.

Table 3 about here

Multilevel analyses

In Table 4, the multilevel models predicting disapproval of voluntary childlessness are presented. Model 1 shows which characteristics significantly predict attitudes on voluntary childlessness. Respondents are more disapproving of voluntary when they are older, lower educated, not employed and religiously involved. Furthermore, married and widowed individuals are more disapproving of voluntary childlessness than those who are divorced or cohabiting. Single people's attitudes are not significantly different from those of the married and widowed. Not surprisingly, parents are more disapproving of voluntary childlessness than respondents without children.

The negative effect of gender of respondent implies that women generally are less disapproving of voluntary childlessness than men. Note that the bivariate descriptive results (Figure 1) show the opposite. In other words, including control variables in the model resulted in a reverse effect of gender of respondent. Additional analyses (not presented) indicated that this is mainly due to including religious involvement and employment status in the multivariate models. Hence, women are more tolerant towards voluntary childlessness than men with the same level of religious involvement and the same employment status, but women are more religiously involved and less often employed. The negative effect of gender of target indicates the existence of a double standard regarding voluntary childlessness; men choosing not to have children are more disapproved of than women who do not want to have children. This result supports Hypothesis 1b. As expected, in countries with a higher national level of gender empowerment voluntary childlessness is less disapproved of. Finally, the random part of the model shows that the variance of gender of target is .014 and significantly different from 0; indicating that the double standard varies across countries.

In Model 2 the interaction between gender of target and gender of respondent was added. The negative effect of this interaction term, in combination with the finding that the main

effect of gender of target – now representing the effect for male respondents – is not statistically significant anymore, indicates that women hold a double standard regarding voluntary childlessness, whereas men do not. The main effect of gender of respondent – now representing the effect on disapproval of childless men – is also not significant anymore. This indicates that, taking into account the effects of control variables, women and men have the same attitudes towards men who choose not to have children (contrary to what the bivariate results in Figure 1 indicated). Adding the gender interaction improved the fit of Model 2 compared to the fit of Model 1 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 17.75$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .001$).

In a next step, the cross-level interaction between gender of target and the level of gender empowerment was added to the model (cf. Model 3). The negative effect of this cross-level interaction indicates that the higher the level of gender equality in a country, the stronger the double standard (in favor of women) in this country, supporting Hypothesis 2. By adding this interaction term, the variance of gender of target decreases with 42.9%. This implies that 42.9% of the variation between countries in the double standard is explained by differences in level of gender equality. The model fit improves significantly (Model 3 vs. Model 2: $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.97$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = .015$). In Figure 2 we present this interaction effect. The plot is consistent with version II of Hypothesis 2.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study is, to our best knowledge, the first to show the existence of double standards regarding voluntary childlessness, through the analysis of a large and representative dataset including a majority of European countries. Previous research on attitudes towards voluntary childlessness ignored the possibility of different norms for men and women. Previous research on double standards mainly focused on sexual double standards, double standards of aging and double standards in the evaluation of task performance. The current study did find double standards with respect to voluntary childlessness, at different levels across Europe. Interestingly, women were found to endorse stronger double standards than men. Furthermore, the results of the current study indicated that double standards are associated with the gender equality in a country. Below, we discuss these results more fully, considering the role of cultural context in shaping double

standards, offer some direction for future research and speculate about societal implications of double standards.

Whereas gender-related double standards until now usually implied that norms are stricter for women (e.g. the sexual double standard), our findings indicated that voluntary childlessness is more accepted for women than for men. This double standard is mainly endorsed by women. Overall, men do not judge voluntarily childless men and women differently (note that this is overall in Europe, in some countries men endorse the same double standard as women). It is not the case, however, that women are more disapproving of childless men than men themselves. They are as tolerant towards men who choose not to have children as men themselves (when controlling for individual background characteristics), but they are more tolerant towards women who make this choice. This finding might be explained by the fact that women bear the physical costs of having children, and usually take up the greatest share of the care for children. Hence, the costs of having children for their personal and professional life are higher *for* women and might especially be recognized *by* women. As men's lives are affected less, their choice not to have children might be less understood. Perhaps, when a man chooses not to have children, some women even consider him to be 'obstructing' or preventing his partner from realizing her possible wish to have children.

The existence and strength of the double standard with respect to voluntary childlessness varies substantially across Europe and is related to a country's level of gender equality. Interestingly, we found that the higher the level of gender equality, the stronger the double standard regarding voluntary childlessness. This might seem counter intuitive, but given the fact that in Europe the double standard with respect to voluntary childlessness is generally in favor of women, it is not so surprising. Apparently, people (and especially women) in more gender equal countries are particularly tolerant towards fertility decisions of other women. In countries with high gender equality, such as Scandinavian countries (Oláh & Bernhardt, 2008), processes of modernization and emancipation may have led to a higher emphasis on individual autonomy and decision making especially for women. Eastern European countries generally showed no double standards. These countries, with lower gender equality, still endorse more conventional family norms and values (e.g., Koytcheva & Philipov, 2008) which may lead to a general disapproval of voluntary childlessness but not specifically to double standards with respect to fertility behaviour.

The presented result suggest that double standards with respect to voluntary childlessness exist, although differently endorsed by men and women and across countries. Through the analysis of a large and geographically representative dataset, the current study offers an extension of previous work on double standards and on norms about voluntary childlessness. The split ballot design of the ESS provides an excellent opportunity to examine double standards. Measuring double standards at the individual level might be very difficult; when each respondent would have to rate his or her disapproval of men *and* of women based on the exact same items, the likelihood of socially desirable answers (i.e. no double standard) would probably be high.

These strengths noted, the current study is not without limitations. First it is worth noting that the ESS is not a longitudinal survey and therefore our study had a cross-sectional design. We assume that emancipation processes have caused more changes in attitudes towards women than towards men, explaining the different strengths in double standards for men and women. However, we do not know if and how a double standard in norms about voluntary childlessness were manifested in past times. There are no cross-national trend data at hand that could provide this information. It would be interesting to examine if national datasets could provide more historical information on the causal associations between processes of emancipation and double standards with respect to demographic behavior.

In addition, future research could elaborate on the links between personal characteristics, such as education and religiousness and double standards. Besides our main focus on cross-national differences in double standards, we chose to investigate only one individual characteristic, namely gender. When examining gender-related double standards this is of course the most important individual determinant to investigate. Investigating the effects of other individual characteristics would have required the inclusion of more interaction effects – as double standards are not measured at the individual level – which would have produced less parsimonious statistical models. Another suggestion for future research would be to focus on the ‘target’ and to examine whether men and women do experience the existence of double standards regarding childlessness and if yes, how it affects them.

Despite these limitations, we believe that the results of our study underline the value of using a gender framework and a cross-national perspective when studying attitudes and norms towards modern demographic behavior such as voluntary childlessness.

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Table 1. Overview of individual characteristics (N = 44,055)

Variable	<i>M</i> (%)	<i>SD</i>
Independent variables		
Age ^a	47.52	18.50
Educational level ^b	3.02	1.46
Employed (% yes)	53.89	
Religious involvement ^c	.00	1.00
Parental status (% with children)	68.70	
Partner status		
Married or widowed (%)	62.76	
Divorced (%)	6.34	
Cohabiting (%)	8.71	
Single (%)	22.18	
Gender (% female)	54.69	
Gender of target (% female version)	50.25	
Dependent variable		
Disapproval of voluntary childlessness ^d	3.14	1.14

^aIn years. ^bScale: 0–6. ^cFactor scores. ^dScale: 1–5.

Table 2. Gender empowerment measure by country

Country	GEM (non-centered)
Austria	7.9
Belgium	6.5
Bulgaria	6.1
Switzerland	6.6
Cyprus	5.8
Denmark	8.8
Estonia	6.4
Finland	8.9
France	7.2
Germany	8.3
Hungary	5.7
Ireland	7.0
Latvia	6.2
Netherlands	8.6
Norway	9.1
Poland	6.1
Portugal	6.9
Romania	5.0
Russian federation	4.9
Slovak Republic	6.3
Slovenia	6.1
Spain	7.9
Sweden	9.1
Ukraine	4.6
United Kingdom	7.8

Table 3. Mean disapproval of voluntary childlessness and double standard in disapproval of voluntary childlessness by country

Country	Disapproval of voluntary childlessness	Double standard disapproval of voluntary childlessness	N
Austria	3.09	-.01	2,113
Belgium	2.49	.18	1,784
Bulgaria	4.44	-.03	1,254
Switzerland	2.86	.11	1,769
Cyprus	3.72	-.15	938
Denmark	1.67	.07	1,448
Estonia	3.95	.06	1,462
Finland	2.47	.40	1,875
France	3.12	.25	1,965
Germany	3.15	.04	2,753
Hungary	3.63	-.05	1,343
Ireland	2.99	.16	1,437
Latvia	3.63	.03	1,690
Netherlands	2.20	.13	1,841
Norway	2.10	.15	1,722
Poland	3.38	.05	1,657
Portugal	2.93	.02	2,107
Romania	3.77	.02	1,943
Russian federation	4.16	-.06	2,156
Slovak Republic	3.58	-.01	1,566
Slovenia	3.15	.18	1,361
Spain	2.89	.14	1,840
Sweden	2.51	.40	1,866
Ukraine	4.38	.02	1,882
United Kingdom	2.79	.12	2,343

Note: Double standards are calculated as the average disapproval of voluntarily childless men minus average disapproval of voluntarily childless women (disapproval measured on a scale ranging from 1-5, the higher, the more disapproving). Hence a positive score implies that norms are stricter for men.

Table 4. Multilevel estimates of disapproval of voluntary childlessness (N = 44,055)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Fixed part			
Constant	3.249***	3.220***	3.220***
<i>Individual level</i>			
Age ^a	.002***	.002***	.002***
Educational attainment ^b	-.052***	-.052***	-.052***
Employment status ^c	-.077***	-.077***	-.076***
Religious involvement ^d	.128***	.128***	.128***
Partner status (ref. cat. = married or widowed)			
Divorced	-.140***	-.140***	-.140***
Cohabiting	-.092***	-.091***	-.091***
Single	-.023	-.023	-.023
Parental status ^e	.195***	.195***	.195***
Gender of respondent ^f	-.069***	-.017	-.017
Gender of target ^f	-.094***	-.038	-.037
Gender of target * gender of respondent		-.102***	-.103***
<i>Country level</i>			
GEM ^g	-.384***	-.381***	-.384***
<i>Cross-level interaction</i>			
Gender of target * socio-economic gender equality			-.059***
Random part			
Variance (gender of target)	.014**	.014**	.008**
Variance (constant)	.155***	.155***	.154***
Covariance (gender of target, constant)	.001	.002	.002
Variance (residual)	.800***	.799***	.799***
Log likelihood	-57,683.933	-57,666.181	-57,660.213

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Notes: ^a In years. ^b Scale: 0–6. ^c 0 = not employed, 1 = employed. ^d Factor scores. ^e 0 = no children, 1 = has child(ren). ^f 0 = male, 1 = female. ^g Original scale: 0–10, mean-centered.

Figure 1. Disapproval of voluntary childlessness by gender of respondent and gender of target

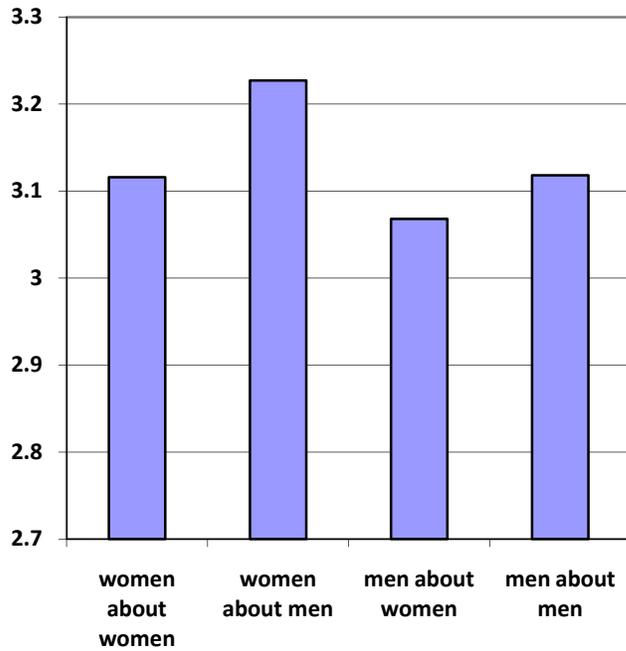
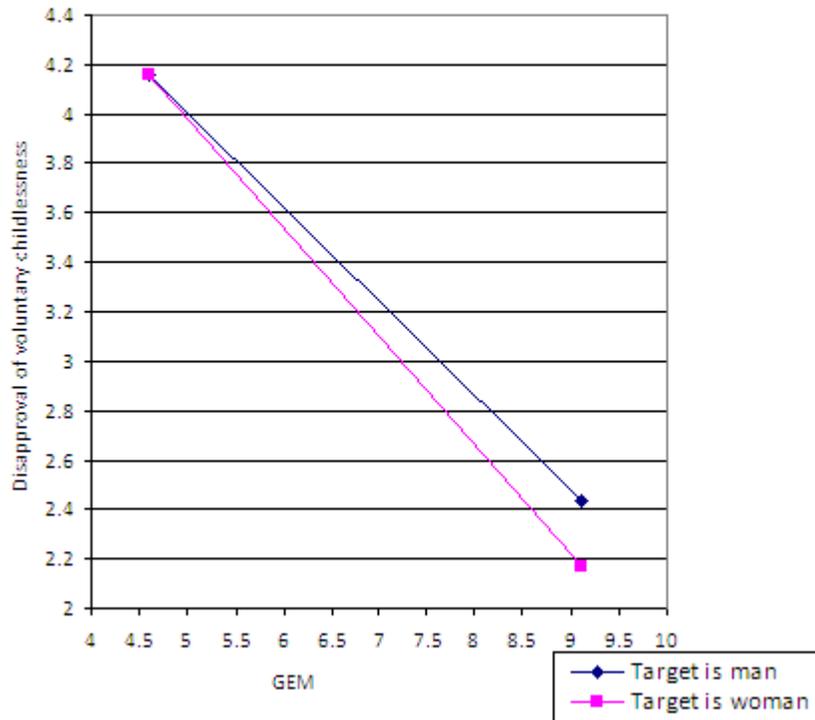


Figure 2. Disapproval of voluntary childlessness: cross-level interaction effect of sex of target and GEM



Note: The interaction plot is for a married woman of average age (47.5), who is employed and married, has children, and has an average level of education and religiosity.